

A 40 Year Port Tradition Takes Center Stage

The Port Washington Summer Show celebrates milestone for youth summer musicals.



Editor's Note: Special thanks to Andrea Mastrocinque-Martone for this post.

Traditions are not a given in America's communities. You have to have the right combination of commitment, enthusiasm, sweat equity and the ability to work as a team. Traditions also require a vision, and a small five-year old girl



realized that vision when playing her first role as Cinderella in a Port Washington backyard that served as a stage.

Her name is Pamela Papasidero, a third generation Port Washington "townie" (lovingly said) whose first "Ah-Ha!" in her life was her realization that there is magic to be had on a stage. Fast forward decades later and she catapulted the magic, bringing it to new heights when she and her husband, Ron decided that Port's youth could benefit from a fun, lively musical production that would simultaneously infuse with self-esteem, confidence and camaraderie skills. *Voila!* A tradition was born, and the hit perpetuates today and perhaps takes center stage – along with other community traditions of which this community has become known for: Pride in Port, HarborFest, The Gambol, and The Sousa Bandshell outdoor summer concert series.

And this is the story of one of Port Washington's most successful community traditions called the Port Summer Show. Celebrating its 40th year this summer as the only yearly summer musical of its kind for middle and senior high students, the Port Summer Show has lured thousands of wonder-eyed amateur talents to participate, and re-create many of Broadway musicals that make everyone's heart sing.

A full 185 students, Summer Show alumni, parents and volunteers pooled talent and resources to host "My Favorite Year" on Aug. 2nd-5th, a very apropos selection given the milestone timing. It was on Schreiber's stage that perhaps the most talented pool of stars gave their best performance to a packed audience, 60 of whom were former Schreiber students and Port Summer show alumni.

The purpose of the multi-minute standing ovation given by the audience at the conclusion of the show was two-fold: one, to honor the talents and gifts of the extraordinary cast, crew and orchestra; and two, as a tribute to the visionary founders – Pam and the late Ron Meadows, one of whom was present and the other there in spirit.

Founders Have Deep Roots in Port Washington

Pam Papasidero grew up in Port Washington and went through the Port schools, graduating Schreiber in 1967. She met Ron Meadows in her senior year of high school (he was a 1957 graduate of Schreiber) when they worked at Publisher's Clearing House. A new chapter in their lives was written when they both realized that they were soulmates with a strong passion for musicals and theater. They participated in the Port Play Troupe (an adult performing group that was active since 1927) – he overseeing the technical aspects of the

performance, and *she* as a stage performer. It was during these days that the dynamic duo heard that the Port Play Troupe had produced a one-time winter children's musical called "The Main Street Children's Show," which was a big hit in the late forties, but lacked a director to perpetuate a yearly show. Enter Pam Meadows who took the reign as director and rallied forces to underwrite the show's costs, find a local stage, and recruit talent. The skills she learned from her Cinderella days kicked in big time coupled with Ron's skills as a committee member for the Sousa Bandshell.

On a hot summer's eve in a torrential rainfall, the first official Summer Show ("Anything Goes") debuted at the bandshell, with the lawn lined with hundreds of attendees shielded by umbrellas with ear-to-ear smiles on their faces. Fifteen- -year-old David Barnet was the show's first musical director, a budding talented musician with a heart that sings – a protégé of Schreiber's music teacher "great" Phillip Glover. Barnett served as musical director from '72-77 before heading to Yale to achieve even greater glory. Barnett remained very tied to the show emotionally, returning for the 20th anniversary ("The Music Man") as musical director, and then as an alumnus for the 40th, where he led a group that gathered at an alumni reunion at earlier that day in a medley of songs from previous show years.

Traditions, while rewarding, require funding to perpetuate. Over the years, the funding was provided in part by the and fundraisers. Challenged by a cyclical, lean economy over the years, the producers of the Summer Show looked to greener and lucrative pastures to fuel their production passions. Robert L. Harding, Jr., a local rose to the occasion, pledging to underwrite costs of producing the show at the high school for a week, and absorbed custodial and other fees. His philanthropic effort continues today, along with help from other businesses in the Port community who recognize a good thing when they see it.

"I love the Port Summer Show and have had confidence in the show organizers over the years, which gives me pride to be a major contributor," Bob Harding says.

"From 1972 to 2012, The Port Summer Show has lit up Schreiber's stage and opened lives for hundreds of youths who have since followed their own dreams," says Phil Glover, a retired Schreiber music teacher and former musical director for the Port Summer Show. "This is truly the magic that Port Washington has to offer, thanks to traditions like this."

Since Pam retired from directing the show, others have seized the reigns of managing its success, including Pat Blumlein, Beth Mulvihill and a host of

other Port parents who served as past presidents. This year's show's co-presidents were Elisabeth Roberts and Susan Hoffman. The director was Jason Summers and conductor.

As a former multi-year president of the Port Summer Show, a Schreiber graduate and a "townie" myself, this year's performance was by far "My Favorite Show."